

## ABSTRACT

A printing consumable loading assembly is provided in an imaging system including a system housing and a printing consumable holding assembly within the system housing. The loading assembly includes at least one consumable-containing cartridge, and at least one opening in the system housing having a size and shape adapted to permit the consumable-containing cartridge to pass therethrough. A guide assembly is connected to the imaging system within the housing. The guide assembly is adapted to receive and grasp a consumable-containing cartridge as it is inserted through the opening in the system housing. The guide assembly guides the consumable-containing cartridge into an in-use position within the printing consumable holding assembly. The loading assembly can accommodate a plurality of consumable-containing cartridges in a variety of ways. In one embodiment, cartridges can be loaded into a plurality of openings in the system housing. In an example, a registration key mechanism is provided on the openings in the system housing and the consumable-containing cartridges, whereby respective consumable-containing cartridges can fit only into corresponding openings in the system housing. The at least one opening in the system housing can be provided as a single opening when there is only one cartridge type to be loaded into the system, e.g., the system is a black-and-white printer. Alternatively, the single-opening loading assembly can be provided in a system where there is a multiple-cartridge loading assembly, such as a carousel mechanism. A method of loading printing consumables in an imaging system is also described.